

Message Text

SECRET

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EXDIS

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: UR, US, PEPR
SUBJECT: MY CONVERSATION WITH ARBATOV APRIL 18

1. I MET BRIEFLY WITH USA INSTITUTE DIRECTOR GEORGIY ARBATOV APRIL 18 FOR A DISCUSSION OF THE SECRETARY'S VISIT AND ARBATOV'S OUTLOOK FOR U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONS. ORIGINALLY I HAD INVITED HIM TO LUNCH IN EARLY APRIL BUT HE HAD BEEN UNABLE TO ATTEND. ON APRIL 13 HE CALLED TO ARRANGE THIS MEETING AT HIS INSTITUTE.

2. ARBATOV WAS RATHER OPTIMISTIC ABOUT PROSPECTS FOR THIS WEEK'S MEETINGS IN MOSCOW AND SAID THAT THE SOVIETS ARE PREPARED TO TAKE A "CONSTRUCTIVE" POSITION. I POINTED OUT THAT THE U.S. SIDE WOULD SERIOUSLY TRY TO MEET SOME OF THE SOVIET CONCERNS IN SALT AND THAT WE HOPE AND EXPECT THE SOVIETS TO RESPOND LIKEWISE.

3. ON THE RB/ER WEAPON I POINTED OUT THAT THE PUBLIC SOVIET POSITION IS UNCOMPROMISING. ARBATOV CONFIRMED THAT
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THE TRUE SOVIET POSITION IS REFLECTED IN THE CURRENT PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN BUT HE DID NOT EXCLUDE THE POSSIBILITY OF "AN AMENDMENT" OF THIS LINE IF, AS A RESULT OF THE SALT TALKS THIS WEEK, OUR RELATIONS SHOULD IMPROVE. REGARDING SOVIET AND CUBAN ACTIVITY IN THE HORN OF AFRICA, ARBATOV ALSO SUGGESTED THAT THE SUCCESS OF THE SECRETARY'S VISIT COULD HAVE AN EFFECT IN THIS AREA ALSO. HE FELT THAT

ONCE THE ETHIOPIANS WERE CONVINCED THAT THERE WAS NO LONGER A THREAT FROM SOMALIA THEN A REDUCTION IN THE CUBAN TROOP PRESENCE WOULD BE POSSIBLE.

4. ARBATOV SAID HE WOULD PROBABLY BE UNABLE TO MEET ICA DIRECTOR REINHARDT BUT HIS DEPUTIES WOULD DO SO AND WOULD EXPRESS THEIR "DEEP FEELING" ABOUT VOA BROADCASTS.

5. COMMENT. WHILE I WOULD DISCOUNT SUBSTANTIALLY ARBATOV'S REMARKS ABOUT THE HORN AND TO A LESSER EXTENT DISCOUNT HIS RB/ER REMARK, I DO THINK IT IS SIGNIFICANT THAT SEVERAL WEEKS AGO ARBATOV WAS VOCALLY PESSIMISTIC ABOUT THE NEAR-TERM PROSPECTS FOR U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONS AND SALT IN PARTICULAR. THUS, HIS CURRENT EXPRESSION OF OPTIMISM REPRESENTS A SIGNIFICANT TURN AROUND. IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER SUCH SUCCESS AS MAY BE ACHIEVED HERE IN MOSCOW CAN ALTER WHAT ARE PROBABLY SUBSTANTIALLY SETTLED SOVIET POLICY LINES REGARDING THE RB/ER ISSUE OR THEIR ACTIVITY IN THE HORN OR ELSEWHERE IN AFRICA. TOON

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